

(Washington, DC) — The United States House of Representatives, by a vote of 425-4, today accepted an amendment authored by Congresswoman Gwen Moore, D-Wisc., to increase funding for legal assistance to victims of domestic violence. The amendment adds \$4 million to the Civil Legal Assistance Program, which provides legal representation for domestic violence victims so they are able to obtain restraining orders, win custody of their children, and navigate the complex and expensive criminal justice system. The amendment will be included in the fiscal year 2010 Commerce, Science, Justice Appropriations Act.

Rep. Moore made the following speech on the floor regarding her amendment:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/RepGwenMoore>

The transcript of Rep. Moore's speech is below:

"My amendment increases funding for a critical program, the Violence Against Women Act Legal Assistance Program, by \$4 million. I would like to thank Representative Poe for his diligent work on this amendment and I also want to thank Representative Mollohan for his commitment to this issue.

"We all make lawyer jokes, but to the women who face domestic violence and need legal representation to successfully flee their abusers, obtain orders of protection, and retain custody of their children, lack of legal representation is definitely not a laughing matter. Nearly 70 percent of women who bravely take their abusers to court do so without legal representation. And too often, having an attorney present is the deciding factor in obtaining that life-saving personal protection order, getting custody of your kids or receiving transitional housing. It's a sad day when a family is forced to stay with their abuser because they don't know how to navigate the court system.

"Earlier this week, I heard from Chris in Wisconsin whose husband sent her to the emergency room a dozen times, broke her foot, held a gun to her head, and threatened to poison her four children before she was able to escape with the help of legal assistance after five long years of torture. I also heard from Danielle of Madison, Wisconsin who obtained a divorce from her wealthy attorney husband, who repeatedly beat and stabbed her. She was left battling her husband's expensive attorney for custody two years after the divorce. Her effort to study the Wisconsin statutes and defend herself in court drew ridicule and rebuke from the judge. These are just a few examples of why this funding is necessary."

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